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NSC BRIEFING

19 July 1960

## SOUTH KOREA

- I. General elections on 29 July for the South Korean national legislature threaten; to result in an unstable multi-party situation under the new parliamentary system of government.
  - A. Some 1,766 candidates are running for the 233 seats in the lower house and the 58 seats in the new upper house.
  - B. Four major parties, several minor parties and over 1,000 independents are competing.
- II. Former Vice President Chang Myon is the leading campaign personality and his Democratic party is expected by most observers to win at least a plurality in the lower house.
  - A. But prospects for a strong Democratic administration are clouded by factionalism which may split party after elections.
- III. Wide open nature of campaign precludes any large-scale rigging, but there have been many individual violent incidents.
  - A. Police have not recovered from downfall of the Rhee regime and lack former capability to maintain order. Martial law has been lifted to "provide a free atmosphere for the elections."
  - B. UNCURK fielding 10 election observer teams to help assure fair election.
  - C. Many former members of Rhee's Liberal party running as independents; a few apparently hope to gain legislative immunity from prosecution for past misdeeds.

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- Hostile public opinion, including public demonstrations, has caused 20 of 54 candidates running under Liberal label to withdraw from race.
- D. Left-of-center parties have emerged with about 150 candidates competing for lower house seats.
- E. Present Premier Huh Chung is not seeking election and has disclaimed any political ambitions.
  - 1. He has announced he will retire from public life when new government is formed but he might be "available" for election to the presidency.
- IV. Overriding campaign issue is correction of abuses of Rhee regime, although outcome likely to be strongly influenced by local issues and loyalties, particularly in conservative rural areas.
  - A. Relations with the US are not an issue.
  - B. Some socialists are attempting to make peaceful unification with North Korea an issue but response of conservatives and other socialists has been adverse.
  - C. Issue of relations with Japan is available for ready exploitatic although it has not yet figured prominently in slow-starting campaign.
  - D. Chang Myon has publicly stated he will cut South Korea's 700,000-man armed forces to 400,000 and minimize defense budget if Democratic party wins.
    - 1. While Democrats have long advocated military reduction, this could be election gambit to attract votes of potential draftees and undercut similar promises of socialists.